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## Hedda Zinner: Der Teufelskreis und andere Stücke

Erlis Glass  
*Rosemont College*

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keit" (97). She also smokes a meerschaum pipe. Marcel Unterbrucher from Switzerland looks like a mixture of "Bankgeheimnis, Rotes Kreuz und Bernhardiner Hund" (133). Kant's characters become cheap caricatures.

Kant no doubt intended his sardonically humorous book to be a satire of the real-life conference on culture organized in Budapest in 1985 by the signatories of the Helsinki Accords. This meeting, too, broke into political blocks and was often bogged down by arcane questions of protocol. But Kant's blithe attempt to gloss over serious problems such as censorship and state control of the arts by either ignoring them or seeking to defuse them through humor allows the reader no insight whatsoever into the workings of the conference.

Moreover, Kant's narrative fails even to allude to the counter-conference in 1985 sponsored by dissident Hungarian intellectuals which was attended by writers and artists from 13 different nations. They included names such as Susan Sontag, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Amos Oz. Hungarian officials attempted to prevent this meeting by refusing access to a hotel hall the organizers had rented, forcing the participants to meet in a private apartment.

All in all Die Summe is a surprisingly bad book. It trivializes serious issues and thoughtlessly seeks to shape humor by playing on old but still divisive ethnic and national stereotypes. No less important, the novel, which drags along with little apparent plot and no engaging personal conflicts, is simply not good reading.

James Knowlton  
Austin College

Der Teufelskreis und andere Stücke. Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben. By Hedda Zinner. Edited by Eckhard Petersohn. Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1986. 654 pages.

This is a volume of six plays by a versatile author, whom Peter Demetz describes as "still of the Weimar generation" yet also as a successful playwright of GDR "establishment theater" (After the Fires: Recent Writing

in the Germanies, Austria and Switzerland. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986, p.236). This volume of plays is not intended as a critical edition; the text contains a one and a half page afterword in which the editor reveals much helpful information: the publication and first performance dates of these dramas, which belong primarily to the decade between 1950 and 1960; the fact that Ms. Zinner herself selected, scrutinized, and authorized the plays for the present edition; some information about her other plays (there are fourteen); and a word about her memoirs entitled Auf dem roten Teppich: Erfahrungen, Gedanken, Impressionen (first edition 1978, new expanded edition in the same series as these plays 1986). In addition to the remarks of the editor, there is a list of other works by Zinner including seven novels, one volume of short stories, a volume of Fabeln, Lieder, Gedichte und Nachdichtungen in addition to her autobiography. All these volumes are published by the same house, most in more than one edition, and all testify to her success in the GDR. Ms. Zinner has also written children's theater scripts as well as radio and television dramas.

Of the six plays reproduced here, one is a comedy entitled Was wäre wenn..., which poses the interesting question: what would happen if the citizens of a GDR border town were led--or misled--to believe that their region was being given to the Federal Republic and that the nobility would be returning to the town castle? Within the typical conventions of three-act comedy--lovers' misunderstandings, heroes and villains from various social niveaus within the classless society, and eventual resolution of all conflicts by marriage--Zinner creates ample occasion to present a political message while providing light entertainment.

Another play, Lützwower, is the only historical drama. It is presented in verse form, striking a rather surprising note. The action takes place in March 1813 in Saxony and the play echoes historical dramas of other German playwrights. Despite numerous shocking incidents and reversals for the cause of freedom, the play delivers the hopeful assurance: "Nichts ist umsonst. Der Funke hat gezündet" (433).

The other four plays, entitled Caféhaus Payer, General Landt, Der Teufelskreis, and the most recent play, Ravensbrücker Ballade, all treat the horrors, some

of them graphically presented, of National Socialism. So explicit are some of the scenes, particularly the ones in the Ravensbrücker Ballade, that the most natural reaction one experiences is a wincing grimace. When contemporary film clips and tape-recorded sounds of torment are added as montage effects in this most technically modern of Zinner's plays, the result must be anything but balladesque.

For the most part Zinner writes traditional five-act drama; the only consistent innovation is her use of the word Bild for scenes and the consecutive numbering of these Bilder throughout the five acts of each play. Several of the dramas are so rich in incident and so lengthy as to resemble prose narratives and rarely are other conventions like unity of time or place upheld.

Zinner's great strength lies in the natural tone and readability of these plays, particularly Caféhaus Payer, which takes place in Nazi-occupied Vienna before the war and General Landt, which also predominately takes place before the war begins. Russian characters are consistently lionized as heroes or heroines in these plays and Fascists of every stripe condemned. The corrupting and dehumanizing force of National Socialism, as well as its horrors, is amply illustrated in these plays which are presented by the editor as perennially popular and as a timeless addition to the canon of GDR drama.

Erlis Glass  
Rosemont College

Das Vierstromland hinter Eden. By Uwe Grüning.  
Berlin: Union, 1986, 320 pages.

Wer sich mit anderen phantastischen Reiseromanen (z. B. Swifts) beschäftigt hat, wird auch in diesem Buch die Reise als Lebensgleichnis und Daseinserkenntnis auffinden. Aber Grüning geht noch weiter, indem er sowohl Rahmen- als auch Binnenerzählung unter den Aspekt der ständigen Bewegung stellt. Der Stil begleitet mitunter seinen Gedankenfluß in ansprechender Weise: Wiederholungen und Steigerungen bestimmter Satzteile, die durch ihre Einbettung in fortlaufend neue Kontexte etwas Variationshaftes erhalten, verraten die

Affinität des Autors zur lyrischen Gestaltung. Drei bereits erschienene Gedichtbände und das Auftauchen mehrerer Gedichte in diesem Roman unterstreichen das vielschichtige Potential des Schriftstellers.

Als Wahrnehmungssubjekte treten im wesentlichen drei Figuren auf: Friedrich Teutsch, ein fast nihilistisch veranlagter Mensch; ferner sein Arbeitgeber, Sir Houston, zu dem Teutsch in einem ambivalenten, neurotischen Verhältnis steht, und schließlich sein Reisebegleiter, Lord Arthur, ein Mann der Tat, furchtlos und von der Idee besessen, den Schlüssel zur Wahrheit im unbekanntem Behemoth zu finden.

Auf einer Schifffahrt (als Rahmenerzählung), die sich am Ende als ewiges Ereignis entpuppt, reaktiviert der Ich-Erzähler in Form von schriftlichen Aufzeichnungen die Entwicklung seiner Vergangenheit: Teutsch verläßt seinen ehemaligen Wohnort, Charenton, eine Stadt der Wurzellosen und Exhibitionisten, eine Stadt des Wahnsinns, Widerrufs und Scheiterns, in der "die Menschen und Dinge . . . eine Parodie ihrer selbst" (19) sind. Ein Fluß trennt Charenton von St. Goar, "eine bigotte Stadt, ein Hochsitz der Heuchelei und des ertragenen Gleichmuts" (39). Keiner dieser Orte bietet eine befriedigende Existenzmöglichkeit, so daß Niedergeschlagenheit und Langeweile das Leben der Bewohner regieren. Je vertrauter man im Zug allmählich wachsender, detaillierterer Beschreibungen mit den ungleichen und doch so nah aneinander liegenden Städten wird, desto mehr wird die Synthese ihrer Gegensätze als universale Schwäche der heutigen Großstadt transparent. Ob hier des weiteren Anspielungen auf tatsächliche, bekannte Grenzsituationen (z. B. Ost-/West-Berlin) vorgestellt werden, zumal der Protagonist ausgerechnet den Namen "Teutsch" trägt, liegt im Bereich des Möglichen. Doch denjenigen Passagen dieses Romans, die eng an die textexterne Realität grenzen, zuviel Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken, hieße seine psychologischen und philosophischen Stärken zu vernachlässigen.

Einzigiger Trost- und Zufluchtsort in Charenton ist das Hotel "King of Despair", wo der "Wein des Vergessens" als bevorzugtes Betäubungsmittel genossen wird. Fällt die Opiumversorgung des Volkes einmal aus, so kommt es auch gleich zur Massenpanik, die revolutionäre Begleiterscheinungen nach sich zieht, jedoch ohne etwas verändern zu können. Unter solchen Um-